

VZCZCXRO5964

RR RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLN RUEHLZ
RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHAH #1175/01 2490745
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 050745Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1493
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2071
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1936
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4259
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2507
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2853
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001175

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EUR/ACE, SCA/PPD, ECA
AID/W FOR EE/EA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [SCUL](#) [KPAO](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: DAS KROL MEETING WITH EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

1. (SBU) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

2. (SBU) SUMMARY: In a pleasant, introductory meeting with Deputy Assistant Secretary George Krol, Turkmenistan's Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers for Education, Health, Science, Sports, and Tourism Hydyr Saparlyev described educational reforms and the construction of new schools. He said there is now Internet access in some schools, but this needs to be extended to all schools. He praised exchange programs such as the U.S. FLEX program. He also spoke positively about possible university partnerships with Columbia University, Texas A&M, or others. The meeting served as a useful overview of official Turkmen views on developments in these areas. END SUMMARY.

OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION

3. (SBU) Deputy Assistant Secretary George Krol met September 3 with Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers for Education, Health, Science, Sports and Tourism Hydyr Saparlyev as well as Education Minister Muhammetgeldi Annaamanov to discuss education in Turkmenistan. Deputy Chairman Saparlyev led the discussion and provided broad and positive overviews of progress in education. He said one of President Berdimuhamedov's main goals is to provide a quality education for all students. Education is free to all. (COMMENT: While education is "free," the practice of paying bribes for admission is widely known. END COMMENT.) Saparlyev noted the construction of 40 new schools, including many with great sports facilities. Children now have the opportunity to study almost any sport from first until 10th grade. Some schools even have swimming pools. The new schools are outfitted with health units in case students fall ill. Students also learn basic hygiene and health principles. He said many more new schools needed to be built. He noted Internet access was being made available in some schools, but that access also needed to be extended. Saparlyev said that there are distance learning programs. Teachers are effectively using technology in all the provinces. Saparlyev also described briefly new money (\$45 million) to be spent on science labs for schools.

4. (SBU) Saparlyev mentioned the importance of exchanges and study abroad for Turkmen students, including the U.S. FLEX program. He spoke positively about possible university partnerships with Columbia University, Texas A&M, or others. He also said that the

government completely funds some students' study abroad. In addition to room, board, books and tuition, the government provides a clothing allowance and a stipend and covers travel costs. Students study Korean, Japanese, and other languages to prepare.

¶15. (SBU) Pointing to the decision this year to resume post-graduate education, Saparlyev said that talented young people who want to get Masters and Doctoral degrees are now able to do so. Three years of post-graduate study is needed to get a Masters degree. A further three years of study will lead to a doctorate. Saparlyev also noted the new specialties that are now available for undergraduates to major in.

¶16. (SBU) Regarding USAID's Quality Learning Program, Saparlyev said they were studying the proposal. He said that teachers already receive training in teaching methodology. In fact, there is specific methodological training in each subject. He said that it was under consideration and that Turkmenistan needs to use the best elements of experience from many countries and use elements that suit local conditions.

HEALTH

¶17. (SBU) When asked about progress in the health sector, Saparlyev pointed to the construction of new medical centers all across the country and in each district. When asked about the capacity of the government to provide doctors and specialists for all of these new locations, Saparlyev said that the appropriate experts were being prepared. He said it is the policy of the president to provide free, quality healthcare to all. (COMMENT: The reality is that to receive quality healthcare and medicine, one has to pay. END

ASHGABAT 00001175 002 OF 002

COMMENT.)

SUMMER CAMPS

¶18. (SBU) Saparlyev said the government has built six children's summer camps and ten more are planned for next year. For a fixed monthly price, children can enjoy fresh air and various sports and craft activities during the three-month long summer holiday.

¶19. (SBU) COMMENT: While some changes, such as the reintroduction of graduate study and the reestablishment of the Supreme Council on Science and Technology, are important steps, educational reform in Turkmenistan has a long way to go. Many real challenges remain such as bribes for entry to schools, lack of materials or teacher training, or the lack of expertise and quality in the healthcare sector. END COMMENT.

¶10. (U) DAS Krol has cleared this cable.

CURRAN